



Northern lights

ARTISTS' BOOKS Sarah Bodman surveys the diversity of artists' books being made in Scandinavia today and the organizations that help promote them, as she looks ahead to a major book arts' festival in Denmark this spring

With Denmark's *Doverodde Book Arts Festival* on the horizon in May, it seems timely to look at artists' books in Scandinavia. As the centres of activity here can be geographically far apart, many artists and book organizations use online networks to share information. Helene Jouper's bokbindarkompetens.se, based in Farsta Strand, Stockholm, is a good example. This website aims to promote dialogue between the creative arts and industrial book production and has a wealth of information on artists' books, bookbinding and related activities in the Nordic region and Europe.

Hanne Matthiesen, based in Malling, Denmark, is also energetically promoting international book arts through exhibitions and workshops. *CON-TEXT* at the Kulturspinderiet in Silkeborg, featured suitcase-based books by 25 artists in Sweden, Norway, Finland, Iceland and Denmark. Matthiesen also organized the recent tour of the *5th International Artists' Book Triennial* from Vilnius. Details of her programmes are announced on www.hannematthiesen.com.

Established in 2001, *Text-Fair* is an annual event that runs as an alternative to the *Gothenburg Book-Fair* and brings together some 50 independent Swedish publishers with a focus on non-mainstream publications. Organized by the publisher Vertigo, this year's fair will be held on 8 May in Stockholm (www.textmassan.com).

Labyrint Press was founded in 2007 by Joanna Sandell and Pia Sandström in Tumba, Sweden. Each year they put together a themed, five-month exhibition of artists' books at Botkyrka Konsthall where Labyrint is based. Visitors are also able to view the permanent collection of artists' books (www.labyrintpress.com).

Kurt Johannessen has been creating artists' books under his Zeth imprint since 1984. His books, such as *Moon, Everything and Nothing, Am I a frog?* and *Steinar* – for which he selected a series of small stones and read each one a fairy tale about trolls – complement or extend his performances, which question our relationship with nature and the universe. Johannessen regularly shows his works internationally and attends the *Small Publishers Fair* in London each year. His work can be seen on www.zeth.no.

British artist Imi Maufe has been working in Norway since 2008. She runs artists' books workshops with Norwegian artists at the Vågsbunnen fellesatelier at Galleri VOX in Bergen, an initiative designed for creative people with mental health problems. She also curates exhibitions such as *Å reise – to travel* (2009), an exhibition of artists' books which looks at how we travel (www.axisweb.org/artist/imimaufe). Maufe recommends TORPEDO bookstore in Oslo, which, as the home of Torpedo Press, publishes artists' books and other art titles. Examples can be seen online at www.torpedobok.no

Danish artist Mette-Sofie D Ambeck specializes in intricately hand-cut paper books and multiples (www.ambeck.mdd.dk) and has also just established a networking site: <http://nordicbookarts.ning.com>. Her book, *Steam, Salt, Milk – a Nordic creation myth*, took over a year to complete and is typographically illustrated, incorporating hand-cuts, burns and pop-ups. For the 2009 *Doverodde Book Arts Festival*, Ambeck produced a unique piece: *Ø: ankomst/afgang*, an island-shaped book hand-cut with the shapes of four bridges. The artist explains, 'Throughout my life – nowadays by plane – I have departed (*afgang*) and arrived (*ankomst*) back to Northern Jutland, Denmark. However, my earliest childhood memories are of crossing one of the four bridges connecting that island to mainland Jutland, by car.' The (19.5 x 52 cm) piece was pamphlet-stitched on Heritage 200 gsm acid-free paper, and is on permanent display in the *Doverodde Book Arts Centre* collection.

Doverodde Book Arts Festival, established in 2009 by Karin Nikolaus and Liz Hempel-Jørgensen is at the Limfjordscenter, Doverodde, Hurup Thy, Denmark, from 13-16 May. This year's theme is 'place of interest' and talks and workshops have been programmed alongside exhibitions of artists' books, book-objects, hand-bound books and paperworks. The *Place of Interest* exhibition opens the festival and continues until 21 June before touring. More details about the event can be seen at: www.bookarts-doverodde.dk

Images, left to right

Looking ba(ck)g 2009, a collaborative, unique bookwork by ARTROVERT, 300 x 180 mm
Greetings from Norway 2004 by Imi Maufe. Screenprinted concertina book, 65 x 100 mm
Steam, Salt, Milk – a Nordic creation myth 2007 by Mette-Sofie D Ambeck. Artist's book, 210 x 210 mm